

REMARKS

Claim 31 has been canceled, and its subject matter incorporated into claims 30 and 37. Entry of this amendment is as a matter of right since no new issues are being raised.

Claim 31 recited that the cutouts of the stencils were filled with a fusible material. No reference discloses or suggests the feature of filling cutouts with anything, let alone a fusible material.

As the Examiner acknowledged, newly cited U.S. Patent No. 6,129,965 discloses paper labels, with no cutouts therein. Newly cited U.S. Patent No. 5,409,742 to Arfsten discloses metal stencils which are placed over a substrate which has been previously coated with a decoration paint (col. 2, lines 43-46). However, the decoration paint does not fill any cutouts in the stencils; instead, the decoration paint is painted over the substrate. The stencils act as masks through which a laser beam is directed toward the decoration paint.

The same is true for newly cited U.S. Patent No. 4,801,490 in which the cutouts in the stencil 4 are not filled with any material, but instead act as a mask through which a sandblasting material is directed.

The same is true for newly cited U.S. Patent No. 5,573,684 in which the cutouts 32 in a mask 33 are not filled with anything, but merely serve as openings through which a laser beam passes.

Allowance of claims 30, 37 and dependent claims 32-36 is respectfully requested.

As for dependent claim 34 in which the applicant claimed the step of covering the filled cutouts with a cover layer, the Examiner's reliance on newly cited U.S. Patent No. 4,179,322 should be reconsidered, because the cover layer of this reference does not cover any cutouts. Indeed,

there are no cutouts. At best, it appears that a cover layer 115 is used to protect finger contacts 101 from dirt and damage (col. 6, lines 33-35).

Wherefore, a favorable action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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